



By Lisa Mosca, MPA

*Lisa Mosca is the public information officer for the City of Sanford.*



## THE RENAISSANCE OF SANFORD AVENUE

Minutes away from the scenic beauty of Lake Monroe in the heart of Historic Downtown Sanford is a community treasure. You can absorb the majesty of it all while grabbing a bite to eat or just taking a leisurely stroll down the brick-lined street - and it's right here in our own backyard on Sanford Avenue.

Because of the importance of this majestic strip of real estate, the City of Sanford and the Sanford Community Redevelopment Agency have worked diligently with

its community partners - businesses, property owners, and residents of Sanford - to create a workable, cost-efficient concept to redevelop the six-block area of Sanford Avenue, from 1st Street to 6th Street. The Sanford Avenue Streetscape concept design integrates the needs of business owners/future business owners, pedestrians, cyclists, residents, and visitors to this corridor. The Sanford Avenue Streetscape Project is a \$2.4 million project that, when complete, will be a dazzling addition to the entire vibe of Historic Downtown

Sanford. There's something for everyone and it's all located in just a few blocks of one another. This marvelous area that generations before have walked, gathered, shopped, and lived will now be totally revitalized.

The groundbreaking for this project began in September 2013 and will soon be complete summer 2014. Visit the friendly City of Sanford to see for yourself. We're more than meets the eye. (Local businesses are still open during the construction phase).

## LOOKING BACK

During the **1950s** and earlier, Sanford's Naval Air Station (now the Orlando Sanford International Airport) attracted many people who frequented the area. Historically the aforementioned area of Sanford Avenue served as the thriving commercial business district for the African American community before desegregation. Unfortunately, in the 60s, this area began to decay, accelerated by the closure of the Sanford Naval Air Station.

In **2006**, the City Commission approved the designation of Sanford Avenue as a Cultural Corridor between 1st and 6th Streets, leading the way for the preservation of this location.

In an effort to restore the community's heritage, from **2006 to 2008**, City staff worked with concerned citizens through a series of public meetings to develop the groundwork for revitalization of the Georgetown Neighborhood, which included Sanford Avenue between 1st and 6th St. One major component of the streetscape improvements is the furnishing of heritage markers along Sanford Avenue, made possible through a Preserve America Grant and a grant match from the City of Sanford CRA. The markers will accentuate the contributions of African Americans in the development of the city.

In **2008** the Sanford City Commission adopted the Georgetown Neighborhood Plan, which is based on the guidelines set forth by Florida's Department of Community Affairs program for Holistic Neighborhood Revitalization. The Georgetown Neighborhood Plan seeks to recognize and respect the unique heritage and culture of the community while encouraging sensitive growth and



development of vacant parcels and underutilized properties, said Christine Dalton, City Planner and Historic Preservation Officer.

In **2009** as a result of city staff efforts, with approval of the Seminole County Commission and City Commission, the Sanford CRA boundary evolved to include the portion of Sanford Avenue that historically served as the African American business district. As a result of these actions the Sanford Avenue Streetscape Project became a reality and a reason why funding was allocated to this project by the Sanford CRA.

Elements of the Sanford Avenue Streetscape include adding more green to downtown by planting trees and landscaping. Street lights, event power, wider sidewalks, brick paved drive lanes, parallel parking spaces, decorative benches, bicycle racks and trash receptacles will all be added for elevated beauty and functionality, attracting more residents and visitors. Funding for this project has been made possible through Seminole County, the City of Sanford, and the Sanford Community Redevelopment Agency.